Initiation Into The Coven - Outdoor Version

Starhawk & Valiente

Candidates for initiation should be in good mental and physical health. They should also be of legal age and sought out the Craft of their own free will.

Before being accepted into the Coven (s)he should spend sometime learning about the Craft and magic and such. (S)he should know about practices that most people get uptight about. She should be told that initiations are perfectly safe and voluntary. Also, if at any time prior to taking the oath she wants to back out, she can do so with out fear or other recriminations.

The candidate must chose a Craft name. This name should not be a common American name and must have personal meaning to the candidate.

Traditionally the apprenticeship lasted for a year and a day. This is a good idea if it can be done. Before (s)he can be initiated, the Coven must vote. A single no is sufficient to not allow the candidate to be initiated into that particular Coven.

This ritual is written for use in the woods. There has to be a path leading from the staging area to a clearing where afire can be lit. To save time, the fire should be setup but not lighted.

The bathtub should be set up along the path and filled with warm water and the other ingredients. The water will also have to be consecrated.

The candidate should be brought to the staging area by their sponsor. She should be wearing clothing that can be cutaway easily by a sword without undoing buttons or stepping out of pants legs. The candidate should be lead down the path by the sponsor. After a little ways a member of the Coven, the Challenger, should step onto the path. They might want to wear a mask. They take the sword that they carry and say:

> "Who comes to the gate?"

The candidate, coached before hand, answers:

> "It is I, (new Craft name), child of earth and starry heaven."

Challenger:

> "Who speaks for you?"

Sponsor:

> "It is I, *name* , who vouches for her."

The Challenger holds the point of the sword up to the candidates heart, and says:

> "You are about to enter a vortex of power, a place beyond imagining, where birth and death, dark and light, joy and pain, meet and make one. You are about to step between the worlds, beyond time, outside the realm of your human life. You who stands on the threshold of the dread Mighty Ones, have you the courage to make the essay? For know it is better to fall on my blade and perish than to make the attempt with fear in thy heart!"

The apprentice answers:

> "I tread the path with perfect love and perfect trust."

The Challenger replies:

> "Prepare for death and rebirth."

And the Challenger takes the sword and cuts off the apprentices clothing till she is standing naked. The Challenger grounds their sword to the Earth. The Challenger should then blindfold the candidate and tie a cord around their wrists and one ankle while saying:

> "And She was bound as all living things must be, who would enter the Kingdom of Death. And Her feet were neither bound nor free."

The candidate is led to the tub and bathed, while still blindfolded, by the rest of the Coven. While being bathed, she must remain quiet. She is helped from the tub and dried off. The candidate is then carried to the Circle. Everyone in the Coven, starting with the High Priest (Priestess in the case of a man), kisses her and says:

> "Thus are all first brought into the world, and thus are all first brought into the Coven."

The High Priest (Priestess in case of a man) now leads the candidate to each of the four corners and introduces her to the Guardians, of course going deosil.

> "Hail Guardians of the Watchtowers of the East and all the Mighty Ones of the Craft. Behold *new name*, who will now be made Priestess and Witch."

The candidate is brought back to the altar. The High Priest kneels and gives her the Five Fold Kiss; that is, he kisses her on both feet, both knees, womb, both breasts, and the lips, starting with the right of each pair. He says, as he does this:

> "Blessed be thy feet, that have brought thee in these ways.
> Blessed be thy knees, that shall kneel at the sacred altar.
> Blessed be thy womb, without which we would not be.
> Blessed be thy breasts, formed in beauty.
> Blessed be thy lips, that shall utter the Sacred Names."

For the kiss on the lips, they embrace, length-to-length, with their feet touching each others. When he reaches the womb, she spreads her arms wide, and the same after the kiss on the lips. The candidate is then measured with the other piece of cord, from head to toe. The cord is cut. She is then measured around the head and chest and knots are tied to mark these lengths. The High Priestess rolls up the cord, and asks the candidate:

> "Are you willing to swear the oath?"

The candidate answers:

> "I am."

The High Priestess asks:

> "Are you willing to suffer to learn?"

The candidate answers:

> "Yes."

The High Priestess takes the apprentice's hand, and with a needle properly purified by fire and water, pricks her finger,squeezing a few drops out onto the measure. The candidate then kneels, and places one hand on her head and the other beneath her heel and she repeats what is read to her. The High Priest says:

> "This is the Charge of the Coven:

> That I will keep secret what I am asked to keep secret, and never divulge the names or dwelling places of our people unless by their consent.

> That I will learn and try to master the Art Magical; but ever remember the rune: "What good be the tools without the inner light? What good be magic without wisdom sight?"

> That in due course I will strive to find a worthy pupil in magic, to whom in future years I can hand down the knowledge I acquire.

> That I will never use the Art Magical merely to impress foolish persons, nor for any wrongful end.

> That I will help the Craft of the Wise, and hold it's honor as I would my own.

> That I consider these vows taken before the Elder Gods; and that if I betray this Charge I accept as my just reward that retribution of destiny which overtakes those who basely betray the trust and confidence that others have placed in them. Know that none can escape the fate, be it curse or blessing, which they make for themselves, either in this life or in another life.

The High Priestess says:

> "Repeat after me: 'I, *name*, do of my own free will most solemnly swear to protect, help and defend my sisters and brothers of the Art and to keep the Coven's Charge. I always keep secret all that must not be revealed. This do I swear on my mother's womb and my hopes of future lives, mindful that my measure has been taken, and in the presence of the Mighty Ones.' All between my two hands belongs to the Goddess."

The candidate repeats the oath. The Coven shouts:

> "So mote it be!"

The High Priest says:

> "Arise and be anointed"

Transcribed to computer file by Seastrider.

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Quote of the moment:

"But we'll never survive!" "Nonsense. You're only saying that because no one ever has."

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